

PART 9 NIGHTMARE

“Mom!” the small figure shouted as she ran desperated.

The little girl sped down the endless corridor as fast as her legs would allow her. It was hard to breathe. With every step she took the temperature plummeted; the steam she exhaled condensed into small clouds that died within seconds in front of her mouth. Each puff was torture, the frigid air passing through her nostrils and into her lungs, freezing everything in its path. She couldn't breathe.

“Ma...!” a wrinkle in the carpet covering the corridor made her fall face first to the floor. She tried to stand up, but tripped over the hem of her dress, tearing it. She burst into tears of pure frustration. She could hear her, all of them. She had to tell her mother. At last she was able to stand up and walk the last few feet to the gate that led to the throne room. She grabbed the handle and pulled with all her might, but the door would not budge. She heard the exalted voices echoing from inside the room; she had to get in any way she could. She started pounding on the door with her small fists.

“Mom! Mom, open up! It was her! Do you hear me?! I saw her take them away!” she shouted.

Her warning was barely a whisper compared to the volume of voices in the room, growing louder and louder. Suddenly, what had once been an out-of-control murmur became a storm of terrified shrieks. The girl struggled desperately to open the door as she called out for her mother.

“Catra, don't come in!”

The queen's voice was suddenly drowned out by a voice from beyond, speaking an unknown language. A language that invoked the deepest darkness, the most unfathomable evil. Shadows closed over Catra, blinding her, while the screams in the throne room grew even more deafening. Streams of cursed magic intoxicated the atmosphere, making the air unbreathable. Catra felt like drowning. She slumped limply in front of the room struggling to stay conscious, listening as the terrified voices gradually died away, until all was silence. She sat up with difficulty, trembling, leaning one of her little hands on the wall to avoid falling again. She approached the entrance again. The door was now covered with frost, as if all the warmth in the room had suddenly been consumed. She reached up trying to open the gate, and this time it gave way easily. A creaking sound preceded her as she entered the room. The darkness was still there, crouched in every corner, she could feel it. Her skin bristled unwillingly. She advanced slowly, groping, guided by her instinct and her memory, and tried to find her mother's throne. The atmosphere was rarefied, as if the room had been closed for years, even though it had been full of people only seconds before.

“Mom?” the child asked with a whisper.

She bit her lip hugging herself when there was no response. She noticed how her eyes filled with tears, but she didn't allow herself to cry. She wiped her eyes with her hands as she tried to find the throne.

“Mom, please answer me,” she sobbed.



Suddenly, her foot bumped into something. She bent down and groped with her hands until she found the object. It was metallic. She recognized it at once: it was the queen's crown; she had seen it glittering in his mother's auburn hair for as long as she could remember. One of the emeralds set in it caught a tiny ray of light that slipped through the crack in the door and Catra could see what lay at her feet. Her mother's dress covered in ash. She looked around in horror. The greenish light then spread throughout the room, illuminating the nightmare; mountains of ash were distributed everywhere in the room, stinking the air. Catra's breathing quickened. She collapsed over her mother's remains sobbing uncontrollably as the world turned to dust around her. She didn't notice the shadow looming behind her until it was too late. She turned in terror, pupils dilated, as the sorceress's green eyes watched her coldly.

"It's your turn, little one," a cruel voice said.

And then all was blood.

Blood. Shee smelled it, felt how it circulated warmly through the blood vessels, how her heart pumped it frantically to every corner of her body. Its fragrance awakened every one of the beast's senses. She could stand it no longer and pounced on the girl resting next to her. She pinned her to the armchair she occupied by straddling her, twisting her wrists in a brutal hold. The girl had no time to scream. She sank her fangs into the soft skin of her neck and began to drink fast, draining the life from her victim, as she had done for so long; for all those years of solitude, where the only contact with another human being had been during the hunt. The warm liquid flooded every inch of her body, making her feel whole for the first time in years. She let herself be carried away, getting lost in the taste of blood. She noticed her victim's heartbeat getting fainter and fainter, her agonized voice barely a whisper.

"Ca...Catra..." Adora breathed.

Adora's laughter echoed somewhere in her mind and Catra suddenly awoke from her nightmare just to enter another one. She jerked away from her and watched in horror at what she had done; what she had been about to do. Beneath her Adora laid limp against the couch; the deathly pallor her skin had taken on contrasted frighteningly with the scarlet red of the blood that slid slowly down her neck, soaking the white camisole she wore to sleep. Her narrowed eyes stared glassily at her, their light fading by the moment.

"No, no, no, no, no ..." Catra rushed at her, trying to cut off the bleeding she herself had caused. Adora's blood now slipped through her fingers. She burst into desperate tears as she tried her best to stop her from bleeding out.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry," she sobbed. She raised her watery eyes to look at Adora. The girl awkwardly lifted a bloodied hand and gently slid it down her cheek, catching one of her tears as she smiled weakly at her before losing consciousness. Catra clung to her hand, desperate to feel her pulse, to make sure she was still there. She could feel it fluttering faintly on her wrist, slowly fading away. Her heart skipped a beat. She couldn't let her die. She made a decision.

"Please don't leave me. Stay with me." she whispered as she leaned her head against Adora's



Then, she snapped her wrist open and began to suck her own blood. She laid Adora gently on her arm, holding her by the nape of her neck. She leaned over her carefully and sealed her lips with her own as she let the blood gush into her mouth, giving her back the life that was draining from her body.

